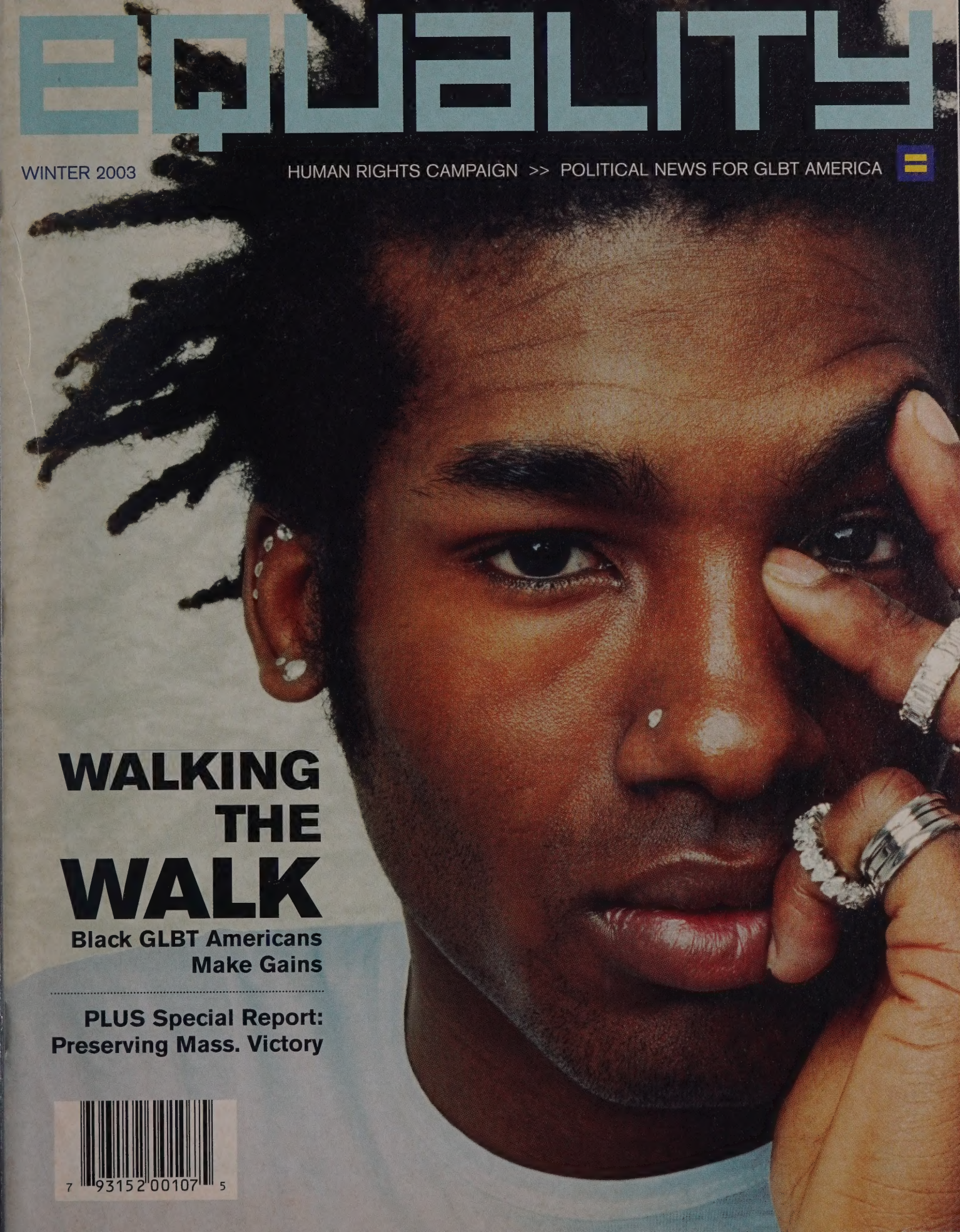
EQUALITY

WINTER 2003

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN >> POLITICAL NEWS FOR GLBT AMERICA



WALKING THE WALK

Black GLBT Americans Make Gains

PLUS Special Report: Preserving Mass. Victory

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letter from the editor

For the last four months, we at the Human Rights Campaign checked every day for a ruling in the case of *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* in which seven Massachusetts same-sex couples sued for the right to civil marriage. We carefully planned what HRC would do on Decision Day, and on Nov. 18 when the ruling came down, we were ready — and yet surprised. Perhaps it was because the decision was what we had dared to hope for — the legalization of same-sex civil marriage in the first American state.

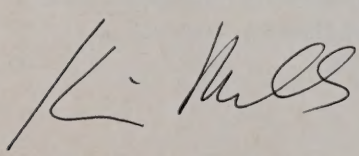
Perhaps it was also because the judges spoke so eloquently about the basic protections we seek: "Recognizing the right of an individual to marry a person of the same sex will not diminish the validity or dignity of opposite-sex marriage, any more than recognizing the right of an individual to marry a person of a different race devalues the marriage of a person who marries someone of her own race," the court wrote. "The marriage ban works a deep and scarring hardship on a very real segment of the community for no rational reason."

In this issue of *Equality*, Legal Counsel Lara Schwartz explains why civil marriage is necessary — and why mere contracts or civil unions don't provide the same protections. National Field Director Seth Kilbourn details HRC's latest efforts in this fight, and against the religious right and its pernicious Federal Marriage Amendment.

Our cover package is about the challenge of being black and gay in America. Managing Editor Janice Hughes talked to longtime leaders of the African-American GLBT community about the exploding numbers of black prides, the role of black churches, and prospects for the future of our African-American brothers and sisters within the GLBT rights movement.

Focusing inward, HRC and the HRC Foundation dedicated our new headquarters building in October, and threw a wildly successful National Dinner.

Finally, we introduce Cheryl Jacques, the next president and executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, who starts the job in January. This is therefore the last issue of HRC's flagship publication with Elizabeth Birch at the helm. We at *Equality* are honored to have had the opportunity to have worked with such a gifted, creative leader. Elizabeth launched this magazine in 1995 and, through her brilliance, made sure we always had plenty of fascinating news to cover. Our work here will always be influenced by her legacy.



Kim I. Mills, Executive Editor
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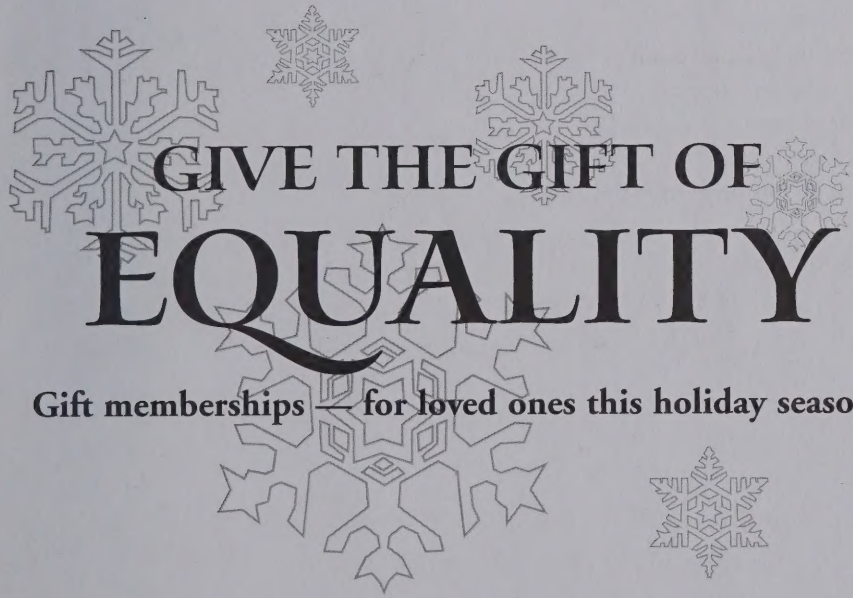
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inbox

Home Improvement

I recently came out to my parents after they heard from another family member that I was gay. Coming out to my parents was not something I was planning on doing while I still lived at home because I feared the kind of environment it might create in the household. However, it turned out to be the best thing for my parents and me. They now have a better understanding of who I am and I now feel more comfortable and secure about our relationship and myself. …

Thanks to the help and resources provided on your website, I was able to direct my parents there to learn more about my lifestyle, sexuality and resources to help them adjust with the big news.

Steven Taylor
Texas A&M University
Commerce, Texas

Past Injustices

Thank you for the thoughtful article, "Moving Toward Marriage," in the fall [2003] *Equality*. I was dismayed, however, by the quote from the HRC communications director that a constitutional amendment limiting the definition of marriage "would write discrimination into the Constitution for the first time ever." Evidently, neither he nor the article's authors recall the constitutional provisions counting a slave as three-fifths of a person, guaranteeing the legality of the slave trade for another 20 years, and providing that an escape to another state would not free a slave.

While working for our own equality, we cannot afford to forget or to be insensitive to the past and present discrimination suffered by others.

Freeman Durham
Cincinnati, Ohio

Editor's Reply: You are correct. While the Constitution itself includes discriminatory language, it has never been amended *to deny civil rights to Americans. We regret the error and intended no insensitivity.*

Corrections: In the fall issue of Equality, *the article "Elizabethan Era Comes to a Close" erroneously stated that HRC helped ensure that the Hate Crimes Statistics Act was expanded to include gender identity and expression. That law does not include those categories — yet.*

Also, the profile of Rep. Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., erroneously stated that he is a co-sponsor of the Feinstein resolution, which would add sexual orientation to the Senate's anti-discrimination rules. This is a Senate bill only.

Parental Approval

As a mother of two gay sons (twins), I would like to thank you so very much for what you are doing to make the world a better and safer place for them. I am a member of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and sit on the Providence chapter's board of directors and take comfort in what we're able to do.

But on the broader scale, it is what organizations like HRC do that gives us courage. So, again, thank you, and if you need help in Rhode Island, we are an active group of parents and friends.

Barbara Metz
Providence, R.I.

EQUALITY SIGHTING!

The Versace Boutique on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue flew an HRC Equality flag in October to mark National Coming Out Day. The Absolut Spirits Co., Versace and the HRC Foundation teamed up for a fund-raiser at the store Oct. 23. Movie star Gina Gershon joined HRC's Elizabeth Birch and Candace Gingrich for the evening, which also celebrated Absolut's coming out campaign, Absolut Out.

Have you spotted the HRC Equality logo? Send photos our way! If your photo is selected, we'll send you a free HRC cap. Send to Equality, *1640 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.*

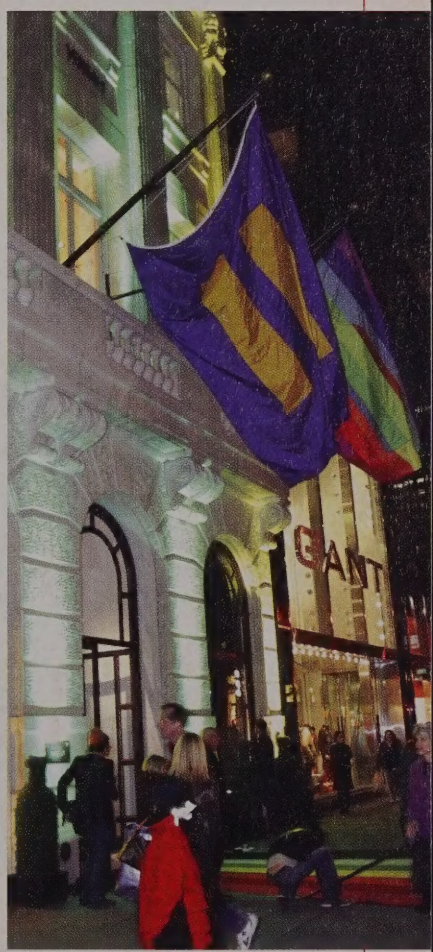


PHOTO: MYCHAL MATIS/WIRE IMAGE

Natural Selection

Senator Cheryl Jacques Named President and Executive Director *By Kim I. Mills*

After an extensive, 10-month national search, the boards of the Human Rights Campaign and Human Rights Campaign Foundation named Cheryl Jacques, a Massachusetts state senator, as the organizations' next president and executive director. Jacques (pronounced Jakes), 41, officially begins work Jan. 5, but has already begun to transition into the new post.

"I am so honored to take on this challenge, and so humbled to be able to stand on the shoulders of the founders and leaders who came before me, particularly the incredible Elizabeth Birch," Jacques told HRC staff at her first meeting with them in November. "This is an amazing organization with a proud history and I look forward to leading this team as we soar to new heights."

Jacques' selection was announced Nov. 3, after a special meeting of HRC's boards, which took place in Denver on Nov. 2. She immediately returned to Massachusetts to meet with her Senate staff and her family and begin preparations for the move to Washington, D.C. Jacques, who finished the Massachusetts legislative session, which ended before Thanksgiving, has appointed a team of staff and board representatives to ensure a smooth transition.

Jacques won election to the Massachusetts Senate in 1992, defeating an entrenched incumbent who was a vocal obstacle to gay and lesbian rights, as well as to state funding for HIV and AIDS services.

Elected at 29, she has earned a reputation as a visionary leader and strong bipartisan coalition-builder. As one of only five openly gay state senators in the country, and the first openly gay senator in Massachusetts, she played a critical role in the battle for equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

"When we work for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, we are working for a stronger America," Jacques said in accepting the HRC post. "From the genesis of this nation, GLBT Americans have been an important part of this country's fabric, making important contributions at every level of our society. We have to continue HRC's tradition of taking that message to every single American."

Jacques said that her first priorities include meetings with staff and HRC's volunteer leaders, as well as with key members of Congress, statewide GLBT organizations and other national GLBT and civil rights organizations. "HRC has a lot on its plate this next year, from the presidential elections to a full legislative agenda. Add to that the uncertainty of civil marriage and the prospect of a federal marriage amendment, and it's obvious this is a time to engage our allies and America at large in these civil rights battles," Jacques said.

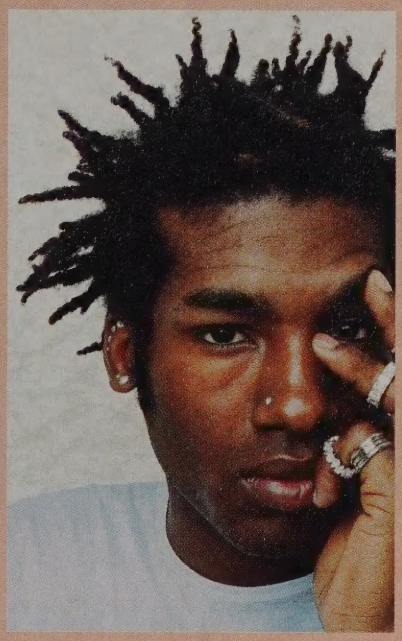
"I am fortunate to join hands with an incredible staff and a team of smart, committed board leaders and steering committees, and an extensive network of volunteers and allies. Together, I know we will move ever closer to our goal of full equality."

Jacques will be the fifth leader of HRC since its founding in 1980. The others were: Steve Endean, who founded the organization; Vic Basile; Tim McFeeley; and Elizabeth Birch, who has served since 1995 and steps down at year end.

"Serving as the executive director and president of this amazing organization has been the thrill and honor of a lifetime," Birch said. "I'm so glad to be leaving HRC as a strong, muscled organization, ready to meet the challenges ahead, and in Cheryl's very capable hands."

Jacques and her family — partner Jennifer Chrisler and their twin sons, 19-month-old Timmy and Tommy — will be moving to Washington.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER BANKS



WALKING THE WALK

Black GLBT Americans Make Gains

By Janice Hughes

"It's very difficult for me to see black and gay as one. Sometimes there is just not a box to put myself in."

"I didn't know why I was being stopped, or talked to, by the police. Is it because I'm black? Or because of my girlfriend seated right next to me?"

"Racism exists in the GLBT community, too. But it's more complicated. It's unconscious. But it's still there."

It's still not easy to be black and gay in America today. All too often, it means living a life caught between two worlds — one made up of the African-American family and church, and the other, the predominantly white gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

PHOTO: PHYLLIS LEIBOWITZ

Neither world seems really safe. For some, the best thing to do seems to be to keep a low profile — to be invisible.

But fortunately, progress continues. Increasingly, over the last few years, more black same-gender-loving Americans — as some in the black community prefer to describe themselves — are breaking the silence. In colleges, in local communities, in health clinics and wherever people gather, they're talking and organizing more than ever before.

"The number of existing and new black GLBT folks means that they are looking for ways to be together and work together," says Mandy Carter, a longtime leader in the community.

Another recent phenomenon has been a huge surge in black pride events. There are now nearly 25 such celebrations across the country organized for and by black GLBT people. Each year, they draw larger crowds and more families who come to attend workshops, network and share their experiences.

Also, greater numbers of African-American youth are coming out — and at an earlier age. They want to be who they are and gain acceptance from their families, communities and church congregations.

"They agree with Mary J. Blige, the 'queen of hip-hop soul' and a staunch supporter of the black GLBT community," according to Donna Payne, the Human Rights Campaign's senior constituency field organizer. "No more drama. No more drama in my life," Blige sings. "I don't wanna hurt again. Wanna speak my mind, wanna speak my mind."

Earl Fowlkes Jr.

New activists are emerging — men and women who are politically savvy, building on the work of earlier generations of activists. "There is a lot going on at the local and regional levels for the community," noted Carter. Recently, some leaders have begun talking about creating a new national network or coalition to try to address issues specific to the black GLBT community.

That comes as many step up their organizing efforts, such as Phill Wilson, founding director of the Black AIDS Institute; Earl Fowlkes Jr., president of the Federation of Black Prides; and Francine Ramsey, president of the ZUNA Institute, a black lesbian advocacy organization.

Further, the Leadership Council on Civil Rights, the NAACP and the Congressional Black Caucus are speaking out regularly in support of the black GLBT community. So are individual leaders, such as Coretta Scott King.

Yet obstacles remain. Much education is still needed — across the African-American community and the predominantly white GLBT community. One challenge, for instance, is the fact that as more people come out, they face more hostility from some parts of the African-American community, says Cureton Johnson, program coordinator of the Whitman-Walker Clinic's Black Men's Health Network. That makes many fearful for their lives when they think about coming out in college or in their neighborhoods.

And leaders of black churches, the bedrock of the community, are still slow in accepting their GLBT members.

Meanwhile, the HIV/AIDS crisis continues to disproportionately hit the African-American community. Approximately 33 percent of urban black men who have sex with men are HIV-positive, and 90 percent are unaware of their HIV status, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And African-American women, who account for a growing share of those infected, compose more than a third of newly reported AIDS cases in the black community, the CDC says.

'Underserved, Understudied'

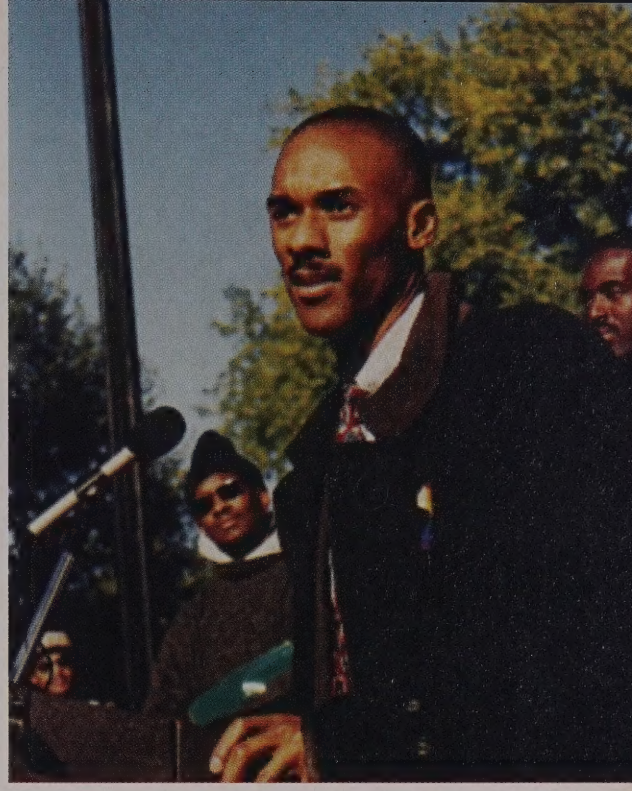
Much more study needs to be done to address the problems that black GLBT Americans face, says the Rev. Irene Monroe, a theologian, columnist and activist based in Cambridge, Mass. Most that is known is through anecdotes, not analysis. "The community is the most underserved and understudied population," she says.

Racism and homophobia take a big toll, Monroe added. "While our black skin ostensibly gives us residence in our black communities, our sexual orientation,

Mary J. Blige

PHOTO: STEPHEN J. BOITANO

"When black people see an issue as a civil rights issue, they get it, they support it," said Boykin.


Keith Boykin

most of the time, gives us pending or complete eviction from it," she said. "And while our sexual orientation gives us residence in the larger LGBT community, racism constantly thwarts any efforts for coalition-building — which weakens the larger movement for sexual equality."

"The reality is — often because homophobia is so prevalent in our own community, we're forced outside to feel accepted," said Whitman-Walker's Johnson. "It's easier."

Indeed, racism exists in the white GLBT community as does homophobia in the black community, according to a survey conducted of 2,645 African-Americans at black pride celebrations in nine U.S. cities in 2000.

Phill Wilson

Half of the respondents agreed that racism is a problem for black GLBT people in their relations with white GLBT people. A third of respondents reported negative experiences in white GLBT organizations and with white GLBT people in bars and clubs. Two-thirds of those surveyed agreed that homophobia is a problem within the black community, according to the survey, a project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Policy Institute.

But is homophobia greater in the black community than it is in the white community? Several gay African-American activists emphatically say no, including Keith Boykin, a lecturer, writer and attorney who worked in the Clinton White House and has done considerable research on the issue.

Wilson of the Los Angeles-based Black AIDS Institute agrees. "I don't think there is more homophobia in the African-American community." But, he adds, black GLBT people are more dependent on their ethnic community for their survival than white people are. "When we are rejected, the consequences can be more devastating. We have no place to go."

However, one of the biggest problems is the lack of positive images in the mainstream media and elsewhere in society of black GLBT men and women, say Boykin, Wilson and others.

While there has been a surge of gay figures on television and in theater, few of them truly reflect the lives of the black GLBT experience, Boykin noted. In addition, the lack of representation of black GLBT people in some organizations has spurred activists to establish their own structures. "Black people have created their own institutions within the GLBT community — black prides and black HIV/AIDS groups," he said.

A Do-Nothing Church?

Meanwhile, many leaders in the black church are uncomfortable addressing issues related to sexuality — and have done little to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic and generally support an abstinence-only-until-marriage approach, say leaders in the black GLBT community.

But there is some movement, says Leslie Mari Watson, director of the Black Church Initiative at the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Churches are slowly realizing that they need to have the conversations — to save the next generation, she said at a Howard University forum last fall. "Some churches are very open and willing to work with young people in a positive way. Some are not."

And that's key because the church is so vital to many black GLBT Americans, says HRC's Payne. "We may be gay, but many of us still cling to our culture, which includes our upbringing in the church. Even if there is no acceptance, it helps you fight racism. It's holy space for us."

The religious right has been reaching out to the black community, specifically to oppose marriage equality for GLBT Americans. Black churches, however,

"We're getting tired of the silence," said Payne.

have yet "to come after us," said Carter, who has monitored the religious right's efforts to foster anti-gay attitudes in the community.

Despite the homophobia of many black church leaders and their influence on the black community as a whole, the few studies that do exist show that African-Americans overwhelmingly oppose anti-GLBT discrimination, according to a survey by the Gay and Lesbian Victory Foundation of 700 African-American voters released in 2001.

"When black people see an issue as a civil rights issue, they get it, they support it," said Boykin. "When they see it as a social issue, they tend to be more conservative. It also reflects the influence of the church in our community." This could explain why recent polling has shown that large numbers of the black community don't support marriage for same-sex couples, which many tend to view in traditional religious terms.

Respect and Support

But there need to be more conversations about the importance of passing laws to provide equal protections for everyone. "Those of us who are GLBT and African-American need to have open dialogue with the broader African-American community about why GLBT people need protections — like those that civil marriage provide," said Michael Crawford, an HRC associate field director. "People simply need to get more involved politically."

HRC's Michael Crawford, left, and Donna Payne

At the same time, all members of the GLBT community must do a little more to support the black GLBT community — by showing up at forums, fund-raisers and workshops to work alongside them in becoming more politically active, Crawford said.

Also, all members of the GBLT community and the society at large need to respect the identities that African-Americans are creating and to find a way to be effective in helping them live healthy, safe lives, he noted. While the black community, for instance, is aware of HIV/AIDS, there is still a lack of dialogue about how to negotiate safe sex and avoid risky behavior. "We need to do outreach to those who don't identify as 'gay,' who don't go to local gay events or community centers," said Crawford.

It's critical to do more creative outreach and prevention and to provide more funding at all levels to battle the AIDS epidemic, says Wilson. "Dealing with HIV/AIDS requires multiple strategies, not just a one-size-fits-all approach," he said.

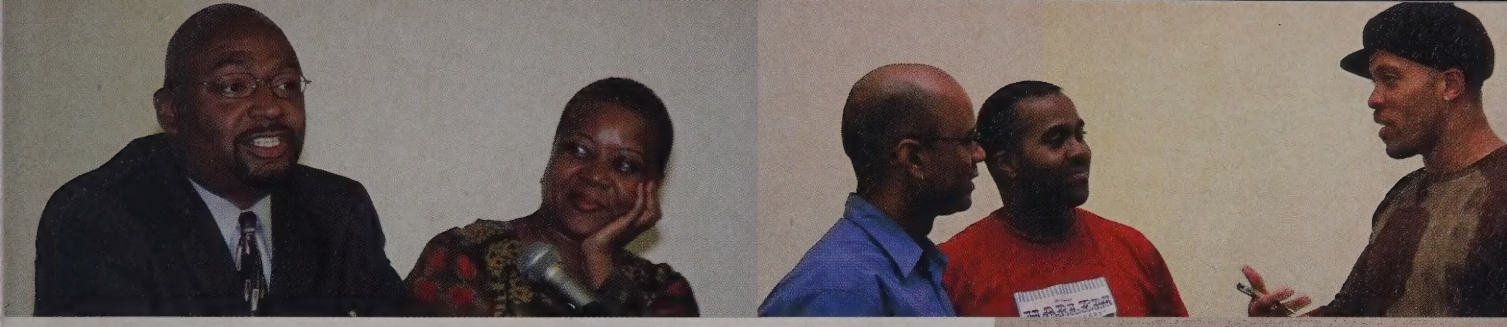
"If our movement is really about equal rights and justice, we as a community still have work to do. We still have a promise to keep."

Today, the black GLBT community is making enormous strides, noted HRC's Payne. "We're making gains by talking — by having the conversation — within the black GLBT community, and little by little, within the black community as a whole.

"A lot of us just want to live our lives and be who we are. We're getting tired of the silence," she said. "We want to be accepted. But we also still want to be a part of our communities."

As Mary J. Blige sings, "It's up to us to choose whatever we win or lose. And I choose to win."

PHOTOS: STACIE D. MARSHALL, JAMES A. DECKER



Participating in a Howard University forum: (L-R) HRC's Phillip Moore, the Black Church Initiative's Leslie Mari Watson, HRC's Brandon Braud, Howard's Sterling Washington and Whitman-Walker Clinic's Cureton Johnson.

Forging Relationships

HRC Builds Stronger Ties to African-American Community

By Janice Hughes

One fall evening last year on the Howard University campus in Washington, nearly two dozen members of the school's marching band attacked a gay student, calling him a "faggot" while beating him. A school instructor who tried to intervene was punched in the face.

When Howard campus police responded a week later and then fumbled repeatedly in collecting evidence, the Human Rights Campaign worked with the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender student group to contact the school president and the city's police department, urging them to investigate the incident fully.

Eventually, the school president met with the student who was assaulted but pressed to keep the incident out of the news. Meanwhile, city police acknowledged that the campus police bungled the probe. Ultimately, no charges were brought. But the incident convinced GLBT students and allies to take action.

In October, HRC and the Howard student group held two campus forums on coming out, anti-gay discrimination and related issues. It's part of HRC's efforts over the last five years to boost support to, and forge deeper relationships with, the GLBT African-American community, said Donna Payne, HRC's senior constituency field organizer. This work includes participation at and co-sponsorship of many black prides and Gospel and Soul events in several cities and a special area on the HRC website.

One of HRC's most successful efforts has been its work with historically black colleges and universities, or HBCUs. In November, HRC sponsored a sensitivity training on sexual orientation for administrators and professors at Dillard University in New Orleans. This spring, HRC will host a weekend grassroots training session for students, thanks to a grant from the David Bohnett Foundation.

Now, students from other HBCUs are contacting HRC to learn more about starting GLBT groups and how to make campuses safer, says Brandon Braud, HRC's constituency outreach coordinator. School alumni are expressing interest, too.

Earlier this year, HRC launched a "Celebrating Diversity" feature on the website, spotlighting — via interviews and personal stories — the varied contributions of GLBT African-Americans, Latino/as and others. Driving the effort are Braud, Payne, Candace Gingrich, manager of HRC's National Coming Out Project, and Christopher Braman, HRC's associate director of facilities.

Each year, HRC also works to bring together the black GLBT community and its straight allies in the black church, a huge mainstay of the community. HRC will hold its sixth annual Gospel and Soul event in Washington, D.C., in April, and its fourth annual Gospel and Soul in Atlanta by the fall. Detroit hosted its first Gospel and Soul in September.

Also every year, HRC sends employees to staff booths at black pride celebrations across the country. Black prides, once word-of-mouth events, have turned into huge gatherings — with their own websites, workshops and entertainment.

One of HRC's highest priorities, set by the board of directors, is to boost diversity across the entire organization — on its boards and staff and among its volunteers and members. People of color now make up more than 20 percent of HRC's staff.

In particular, HRC's steering committees, composed of volunteer leaders nationwide, are building relationships with individuals and organizations in the black GLBT community, and diversifying their membership. HRC steering committees recently held diversity workshops in St. Louis, Seattle and Boston.

HRC also sits on the executive committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the leading national civil rights coalition, and works closely with the Congressional Black Caucus, the NAACP and others on hate crimes, HIV/AIDS, immigration and religious liberties. HRC closely monitors and pushes for strong HIV/AIDS prevention efforts — especially those targeted toward gay and bisexual black men.

"When you pass the blue-and-gold Equality flag, know that there are people at HRC who really care for you," Phillip Moore, a member of HRC's board of governors, told attendees at the Howard forum last fall. "We are there for you."

PHOTOS: STACIE D. MARSHALL

Among those celebrating were two of the seven couples who sued for the right to marry — Gina Smith and Heidi Norton, left, of Northampton, Mass., and Linda Davies and Gloria Bailey of Orleans, Mass.

The Road to Happily Ever After

Why We Must Protect Civil Marriage Rights for Same-Sex Couples

By Lara Schwartz

Without the right to marry ... one is excluded from the full range of human experience and denied full protection of the laws for one's "avowed commitment to an intimate and lasting human relationship."

— Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health

On Nov. 18, 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry. Lead attorneys Mary Bonauto and Jennifer Levi of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders skillfully litigated this case, *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, from the planning stages through final victory in the state's highest court. Because the decision is based upon the state's constitution, the decision cannot be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"This ruling was a resounding affirmation of the equal dignity and value of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people — as citizens, as parents and as partners," said Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign. "The decision will open the door to hundreds of protections and benefits for same-sex couples in Massachusetts."

Rejecting the State's Arguments

In defending the case, the state gave three reasons why marriage should be limited to opposite-sex couples: "(1) providing a 'favorable setting for procreation;' (2) ensuring the optimal setting for child rearing, which the [health] department defined as 'a two-parent family with one parent of each sex;' and (3) preserving scarce state and private financial resources." The court rejected all three reasons, concluding that there was no rational basis to support discriminating against same-sex couples and their families.

Notably, the court stated that lesbian and gay people can be excellent parents, and refused to allow for a system that would deny basic protections for such parents and their children. "In this case, we are confronted with an entire, sizeable class of parents raising children who have absolutely no access to civil marriage and its protections because they are forbidden from procuring a marriage license," the court wrote. "It cannot be rational under our laws, and indeed it is not permitted, to penalize children by depriving them of state benefits because the state disapproves of their parents' sexual orientation."

The court also dismissed arguments by anti-gay "friends of the court" that granting civil marriage licenses to same-sex couples would harm the institution of marriage. To the contrary, the court asserted "[t]hat same-sex couples are willing to embrace marriage's solemn obligations of exclusivity, mutual support and commitment to one another is a testament to the enduring place of marriage in our laws and in the human spirit."

PHOTO: AP/WWP

The High Court's Holding: Civil Marriage Equality

With the Goodridge ruling, Massachusetts becomes the first state to recognize the right of same-sex couples to marry. The court concluded that same-sex couples are entitled to enter into civil marriage, not a "civil union" or "domestic partnership." Rather than create a separate mechanism, the court refined the state's definition of civil marriage to mean "the voluntary union of two persons as spouses, to the exclusion of all others." The court gave the Legislature 180 days to take any actions it deems necessary to bring the state's marriage laws into conformance with the court's opinion. When the 180 days are up, in May 2004, the ruling will take effect and same-sex couples will be able to marry in Massachusetts.

Why Marriage Matters

On June 10, the Ontario Court of Appeals ruled that the province may not exclude same-sex couples from marriage. Two weeks later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, that gay people are not *de facto* criminals. The opinion affirmed the dignity of gay and lesbian Americans and their relationships.

Anti-gay forces reacted immediately and passionately. Rather than defend sodomy laws, they called for action to prevent marriage equality. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., introduced H.J. Res. 56, a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would bar any state from granting civil marriage licenses to same-sex couples and could prevent other forms of relationship protections. Several right-wing groups said that their fund raising would center on the fight against marriage equality.

And then came *Goodridge.*

Marriage equality changed in a day from a hypothetical future consequence of the *Lawrence* decision to a reality of American life. The forces that arrayed against GLBT equality after *Lawrence* will redouble their efforts now that a U.S. state has legalized marriage for same-sex couples. President Bush issued a statement saying, "I will work with congressional leaders and others to do what is legally necessary to defend the sanctity of marriage." There can be no doubt that marriage equality is in danger.

Civil marriage provides hundreds of protections, responsibilities and benefits under state law. Although these protections vary by state, common examples include: the ability to make key financial and medical decisions for one's spouse; the right to adopt one another's children; access to state pension, employment and retirement benefit programs; and exemption from estate and real estate transfer taxes. Although federal law provides 1,000-plus protections and benefits based upon marital status, such as Social Security survivors' benefits and family and medical leave, a federal law called the Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, purports to exclude same-sex couples from these federal protections even if their state recognizes them as married.

GLAD's Mary Bonauto explains the decision.

Without a civil marriage license, same-sex couples must go to great lengths to protect themselves through insurance, contracts and agreements. Although these devices are enormously useful, couples cannot secure all of the advantages of marriage through contract. These documents can also cost thousands of dollars.

Though Massachusetts will be the first state to allow same-sex couples to marry, some states already recognize same-sex relationships through "civil unions" or "domestic partnerships." These arrangements provide many of the state-level benefits of marriage but not federal benefits. Also, while marriages from any state are recognized everywhere else in the United States, civil unions are legally recognized only where celebrated.

Opponents of marriage equality have taken varying positions on civil unions. Some proponents of the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment claim that it would not affect these marriage-like arrangements. As a legal matter, however, this is by no means clear. Recently, anti-gay groups have been urging U.S. lawmakers to oppose *all* forms of relationship recognition except marriage, and to oppose *any* legal protections for same-sex couples.

"The bottom line is that marriage — the legal institution — is enormously valuable to our community," said HRC Political Director Winnie Stachelberg. "Now's the time to fight for it because it's a basic part of our struggle for equality."

Schwartz is an HRC senior counsel.

Share Your Story

In the absence of civil marriage, same-sex couples in long-term, committed relationships are denied many benefits and protections of marriage. They are prohibited from caring for a seriously ill partner and they cannot receive Social Security benefits when a partner dies, to give two examples. Tell us your story so we can help to educate America. Please send to *hrcfamilynet@hrc.org.*

PHOTO: AP/WWP

Mobilizing Around Civil Marriage for Same-Sex Couples

By Seth Kilbourn

Americans are talking about civil marriage for same-sex couples as never before — especially since November when Massachusetts became the first state in the country to legalize it.

National polls indicate that it's time to engage Americans in a discussion about the issue — even though the majority, at this point, still do not support marriage for same-sex couples. Before the Massachusetts high court ruled in favor of same-sex civil unions, 50 percent of Americans said that allowing gay unions would either change society for the better or have no effect, according to a USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll taken in September. And nearly 40 percent of American supported legalizing marriages for same-sex couples, an ABC News poll found the same month.

Wanda Floyd, left, and Sheryl Griffin, partners for eight years, spoke at the HRC news conference last fall.

At this writing, it's too soon to say how the decision in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (the Massachusetts case) might impact Americans' opinions. But even though the country is divided, there is a large group in the center that, after education, begins to support civil marriage equality. "We're in a good position to engage the middle third of the American public about the real lives of same-sex couples and their families — and the real lack of protections in our lives without civil marriage licenses," said Barbara Menard, HRC's deputy political director.

Even before the Massachusetts ruling, social conservatives were mounting an all-out attack on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans and their families. They're pushing federal lawmakers to pass the Federal Marriage Amendment — a sweeping, anti-gay constitutional measure that, at presstime, had 97 co-sponsors in the House. A Senate version had not yet been introduced.

Extending civil marriage licenses to same-sex couples "undermin[es] ... the underpinnings of the institution of the family, and when that goes, everything goes with it, including the stability of the country ... and the future of Western civilization," said James Dobson, executive director of Focus on the Family during a news conference this fall. Dobson's group and others proclaimed Oct. 12-18 as "Marriage Protection Week." For his part, President Bush issued a proclamation declaring "Marriage Protection Week" but had not endorsed the amendment.

HRC is working daily to engage lawmakers, their staffs and the American public in a discussion about relationship recognition for same-sex couples as well as to build opposition to the anti-gay amendment.

In September, HRC launched an ad campaign to build understanding among opinion leaders and mainstream Americans about civil marriage — and to expose the hateful, anti-gay tactics being used by opponents. It is also working with HRC volunteers across the country to write opinion pieces and letters to the editor in local media outlets.

In addition, it has mobilized an unprecedented number of activists through its *millionformarriage.org* campaign. Nearly 215,000 people have signed the petition in support of full civil marriage equality, including 25,000 during "Marriage Protection Week" alone.

Users of HRC's Online Action Center have sent 800,000 faxes and e-mails to Congress telling their stories and urging Congress to oppose the Federal Marriage Amendment. And HRC is urging constituents to get more involved. Its new Lobby Center, for example, gives how-to's on setting up district meetings with lawmakers.

This fall, HRC also produced "So You Want to Get Involved in the Fight for Equality?" — a primer for lobbying, working on campaigns, framing issues in the press and building coalitions.

"By far, nothing is more persuasive than personal contact, whether it's with your member of Congress or someone in your family," said Sally Green, HRC's associate field director.

Kilbourn is HRC's national field director.

PHOTO: JUDY G. ROLFE

Focus on the Family:

It's Big, It's Rich and It's Out To Get Us

By Kim I. Mills

very day, James Dobson enters a small studio at the Colorado Springs, Colo., headquarters of Focus on the Family and tapes a radio show that reaches more than 200 million listeners in 98 countries, including the United States. Dobson, a child psychologist by training, leads the largest right-wing anti-gay organization in the country — and the top of his agenda is blocking marriage for same-sex couples — and all of the rights and protections associated with it.

"[T]he institution of marriage is about to descend into a state of turmoil unlike any other in human history," Dobson said in the September 2003 issue of his monthly newsletter. "The homosexual activist movement, which has achieved virtually every goal and objective it set out to accomplish more than 50 years ago, is poised to administer a devastating and potentially fatal blow to the traditional family. And sadly, there is hardly a politician who has the courage to utter a word of alarm or protest in response."

While there are many inaccuracies in the above quote, here is a fact that should concern all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans and their friends: Focus on the Family is a formidable foe.

Although he heads no church, Dobson has become a spiritual leader to millions through his radio show, as well as books, videotapes, conferences and 10 monthly magazines. The organization he founded in 1977 is enormous. In fiscal 2002, Focus on the Family had income of $126.2 million — six times the budget of the Human Rights Campaign. It employs approximately 1,300 people and operates a campus in Colorado Springs that is so large it has its own zip code.

Focus on the Family is also one of the most insidiously anti-gay groups in the country. Search Focus' website for the word "homosexual" and you get 744 results — most are aimed at "exposing the homosexual agenda." In comparison, the word "divorce" nets 755 documents, and "adultery" pulls up only 123.

The organization is determined to demonstrate that same-sex couples make defective parents, that "safe schools" are unfair to religious children, and that gay people can change their sexual orientation. (Interestingly, one of the first hits that comes up on the website when you search for the word "homosexual" is an audiotape entitled "Christ's Love for Homosexuals," featuring John Paulk, the supposedly ex-gay Focus staffer who was caught in a Washington, D.C., gay bar by a Human Rights Campaign staffer.)

Focus on the Family has made clear that it intends to inject the issue of marriage for same-sex couples into the 2004 presidential races. It was one of the prime drivers behind the religious right's "Marriage Protection Week" in October.

Dobson said recently he is prepared to take a leave of absence from Focus to work in election races where there is an "obvious lack of understanding" on the issue. And the organization is funneling its vast resources into trying to pass a constitutional amendment to limit civil marriage to one man and one woman.

"Passage of an amendment to the Constitution is very difficult, as our Founding Fathers intended," Focus says in its position paper on the Federal Marriage Amendment. "Therefore, the FMA needs a large, cohesive coalition behind it, and efforts to assemble a broad-based coalition around a strong amendment have been successful. Political friends on Capitol Hill say the current wording of the FMA is the strongest that can be attained and has a better chance if the conservative movement unifies behind it." ■

ILLUSTRATION: B. SZPURA/ILLUSTRATIONWORKS.COM

Mixing It Up

at HRC's Seventh Annual Gala

Throw together three-fifths of the Fab Five, one-third of the Dixie Chicks and one-fourth of Sister Sledge. Add Al and Tipper Gore, a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and a civil rights hero and what do you have? The Human Rights Campaign's seventh annual National Dinner.

Some 3,000 people attended — the biggest crowd ever at the gala — held in Washington's new convention center on Oct. 11.

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., gave the keynote address. Honorees included author Michael Cunningham for his novel, "The Hours," A. Cornelius Baker, executive director of the Washington-based Whitman-Walker Clinic, and NBC's "West Wing" — actors Allison Janney and John Spencer accepted HRC's Equality Award.

The evening was full of surprises. Three members of the "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" Fab Five dropped in as did Grammy-Award winning Dixie Chicks singer Marty Maguire. Other guests included the Gores, who paid tribute, along with Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, to HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch, who is ending her tenure this year.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga.

Keynote Speaker

"Throughout our nation, loving and caring people understand that we are all brothers and sisters. Regardless of race, religion, sex or sexual orientation — we are all human beings. ...

"You are fighting for the same principles as our founding fathers and mothers — the same principles as the civil rights movement. You are freedom fighters fighting for the freedom to marry, to serve your country, to work your job and to love whomever you want.

"People fall in love, want to get married and live in peace with each other. Each and every one of us should be free to do that. It's that simple. ... Sometimes, I wonder what is it in these people — who claim to be so holy, so righteous, so pious — that they want to disturb others so much? We must learn to live and let live.

"As it says in our Declaration of Independence, all men — and women — are created equal. Rich and poor, black and white, gay and straight — we are all created equal."

A. Cornelius Baker, Executive Director, Whitman-Walker Clinic

Recipient of the 2003 HRC National Capital Area Leadership Award

"There is still much work to be done before we have brought equality, justice and freedom to all in our nation.

"Lest we forget, over 300,000 gay men have died of AIDS in the United States

PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER BANKS, B. PROUD AND JUDY G. ROLFE

during our great battle against this tragic epidemic. ...

"The lives, the hopes, the dreams of so many of our people continue to hang in the balance."

Elizabeth Birch,
HRC Executive Director

"I have news for the whole right-wing crowd. We are winning because our journey is rooted in the truth and goodness. We also make loving and committed partners. Literally thousands of children are flourishing in our care because we make loving parents. ...

"At HRC, our dream is to transform the laws of our nation into a warm embrace — arms reaching out extended — to include its gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender sons and daughters. ...

"We are a whole and worthy people — absolutely entitled to every right and responsibility conferred on every other American family. ...

"So, let us dream, you and I, of a new beginning. ... Let us dedicate ourselves to the gay child that was born sometime this day in America that someday he might learn the story of this day in his American history class — and know there was a group of men and women that staked his future on the possibility that one day the American democratic system would truly embrace his life."

Michael Cunningham,
Author, "The Hours"

Recipient of the 2003 HRC National Equality Award

"I did want to try and say a little bit about the fact that 'The Hours,' the book, and 'The Hours,' the movie, involve among many things, three big juicy kisses between three very juicy women. ...

"Nobody — not the critics, nor the civilians — talked about it as a gay or lesbian movie. Nobody talked about it as a special movie for a special audience. They discussed it has a serious film about serious human beings. I could not have been more thrilled. Ten years ago, five years ago, that would not have happened. ...

"This is happening because of people like you who you are out, and people who support people who are out — who insist every day by our visibility that we are not going anywhere. We are changing the world. I'm so proud to be a member, I thank you. You're all heroes. And you look fabulous, too."

Joining HRC at its annual gala were (Top, L-R): Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga.; and the Fab Three. (Center row) A. Cornelius Baker; Michael Cunningham. (Bottom) Tipper and Al Gore with Elizabeth Birch; Kathy Sledge of Sister Sledge; and Allison Janney and John Spencer.

California Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg (L, fist in air), then-Gov. Gray Davis (center) and Assemblyman Mark Leno celebrate victory.

California Dreamin'?

By Dan Furmansky

ess than two weeks.

That's how much time Californians had to celebrate one of the greatest civil rights wins ever for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community before opponents stepped in. On Sept. 19, then-Gov. Gray Davis signed the sweeping domestic partner legislation into law at San Francisco's GLBT community center. Supporters packed the hall, crying and cheering. Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg, a Los Angeles Democrat and the bill's author, shared a big kiss with her partner before television cameras.

The Domestic Partner Rights and Responsibilities Act of 2003, or A.B. 205, grants registered domestic partners in California nearly all of the state-level rights and benefits of civil marriage, in areas such as child custody and child support, and community property and debts. It goes into effect in January 2005.

But the celebrating stopped Oct. 2 when state officials announced that a referendum effort headed by anti-gay lawmakers to repeal A.B. 205 could proceed. State Assemblyman Ray Haynes, R-Murietta, and state Sen. Pete Knight, R-Palmdale, have until Dec. 21 to gather 373,816 signatures to put A.B. 205 before voters in March.

Knight asserts that A.B. 205 is an unconstitutional violation of Proposition 22, an anti-gay marriage initiative passed by California voters in 2000.

The referendum effort drew immediate fire. "This is an attempt to strip away critical legal protections that should belong to all Californians by pretending that domestic partnership laws equal marriage, which they clearly do not," said Geoffrey Kors, executive director of Equality California, or EQCA, the statewide GLBT civil rights group that spearheaded efforts to pass A.B. 205.

"Domestic partnerships don't provide all of the same rights as marriages and are not recognized by the federal government or in other states," said Kors. "Without question, same-sex couples and their families deserve full equality — but domestic partnerships provide the only legal protections currently available."

To fight the ballot measure, EQCA announced the launch of a coalition — Equality for California Families — and predicted that supporters of A.B. 205 would fight hard to keep their win intact.

"A.B. 205's passage is a historic leap forward for the equal and fair treatment of same-sex couples across the state," said Toni Broaddus, EQCA's program director. "We're going to protect these rights and look forward to a productive relationship with our new governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who pledged during his campaign to back equality and oppose discrimination against same-sex couples."

EQCA played a key leadership role in bringing together various groups and lawmakers to pass A.B. 205 last fall, said Seth Kilbourn, HRC's national field director. "We owe this win to Equality California, as well as to Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg and other members in the state's LGBT Legislative Caucus for assembling a strong coalition of organizations — including Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Marriage Equality California," he said.

HRC helped EQCA's work through HRC's Equality Fund grant program and intensive grassroots support. Thousands of HRC members sent faxes, e-mails and postcards and made phone calls to lawmakers and the governor, and HRC board members participated in EQCA's May lobby day. HRC staffers and volunteers also telephoned hundreds of members in key districts and sent mailings to thousands more. ■

Furmansky, a former HRC senior field organizer, was recently named executive director of Free State Justice, the statewide GLBT advocacy group in Maryland.

PHOTO: JUSTIN SULLIVAN, GETTYIMAGES

This is the fifth in a series of HRC profiles of 2004 U.S. presidential hopefuls.
A sixth profile is on p. 18.

Joseph Lieberman

Mainstream American Values Include Gay and Lesbian Equality, Third-Term Senator Says

By Mark Perriello

In 1975, Joseph Lieberman, then a state senator in Connecticut, fought to pass a law ending discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, state contracts and public accommodations. The measure was unpopular and failed at the time, but Lieberman says he knew in his heart that it was right to support it.

Twenty years later, Lieberman — now a U.S. senator — still fights for gay and lesbian equality and, as a candidate for president, has promised to bring his vision of justice and fairness to the White House and across America.

"It is a matter of faith and a matter of American constitutional law … that everybody has the same right to life and the pursuit of happiness, and there is no clause limiting it based on race, nationality, religion, gender or sexual orientation or anything else," Lieberman said in an interview with *Equality*.

Now in his third term, Lieberman, 61, is one of nine Democrats running for president. In 2000, Al Gore chose him to be his vice presidential running mate.

Lieberman is a lead co-sponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. In 1996, the Senate voted on the bill, which would prohibit workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. The measure failed by one vote. "It's a shame and frustrating and infuriating that we haven't been able to take this basic American value and put it into law," he said. "I can't wait until I have the privilege of walking into the Oval Office and providing leadership in this cause of non-discrimination in employment."

But Lieberman opposes civil marriage for same-sex couples — like most of the candidates vying for the Democratic nomination. He has, however, pledged to review all the federal rights, responsibilities and benefits that accrue from marriage and to make decisions based on those findings. In addition, he supports legislation that would provide health insurance benefits to domestic partners of federal employees.

Throughout his campaign, Lieberman has argued that he is the best Democratic candidate for the White House because he is strong on security and mainstream American values. He made clear in his interview with *Equality* that basic equality and fairness for gay and lesbian Americans are part of his vision of mainstream American values.

"The American public is moving to connect those ideals to the law and reality with regard to protecting gay and lesbian Americans from discrimination," he said. "Some areas are moving more rapidly than others but that is the role of leadership. That is the role of a president."

Perriello is associate director for HRC's political action committee.

PHOTO: MARIO TAMA, GETTYIMAGES

Joseph Lieberman: For the Record

Workplace Discrimination: Lead co-sponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a bill that would ban workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Hate Crimes: Co-sponsor of a strong hate crimes prevention measure, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act.

HIV/AIDS: Co-sponsor of the Early Treatment for HIV Act, which would expand Medicaid to people living with HIV; supports science-based prevention programs.

Domestic Partnerships: Co-sponsor of the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act, which would provide benefits to the same-sex partners of federal employees.

Wesley Clark

Highlights Need for Military Review of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

By Mark Perriello

Former Army Gen. Wesley Clark, the only Democratic presidential candidate who can tout a decades-long military career, underscored his opposition to the military's anti-gay "don't ask, don't tell" policy in an interview with *Equality.*

He is calling for a military review — and overhaul — of the policy, rather than for its outright repeal, as other Democratic contenders want. Such a review should begin with the premise that the policy has failed, he says.

"I believe that the military needs to rethink the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. It does not serve this country to discriminate against people who want to serve in our armed forces," Clark said in the interview. "I would ask the military to craft and implement a policy that ensures that everyone who wants to serve their country is permitted to do so with honor and dignity. I would then submit the new policy to Congress to replace the current 'don't ask, don't tell' law."

Clark, 58, has never held elective office and thus has no established record on other issues related to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, but he explained his positions during the *Equality* interview and in responses to a Human Rights Campaign presidential candidate questionnaire.

"I think it's a very simple question," he said. "Would you love your child [if he or she were gay]? The answer is yes. Do you want them to have equal rights? The answer is yes. The rest is a matter of implementation."

A native of Little Rock, Ark., Clark graduated first in his class from West Point in 1966. He received a master's degree in philosophy, economics and politics as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in 1968 before serving in Vietnam. Later, he was commander in chief of the U.S. Southern Command and the U.S. European Command and was the NATO supreme allied commander. He retired from the military in 2000 as a four-star general. Should Clark win the White House in 2004, he would be among only a handful of generals who have ever reached that post. If elected, Clark promises to lead on many issues important to the GLBT community.

"As president, I will support the enactment of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act to remedy the gap in federal law to bar employment discrimination based on sexual orientation," he said.

And Clark supports expanding hate crimes law to include sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Also, he said he would back the Permanent Partners Immigration Act. The measure would enable an U.S. citizen to sponsor a same-sex partner for immigration. "I believe committed same-sex partners should be treated just as opposite-sex partners under the law," he said.

Clark also said that same-sex couples deserve equal federal benefits, rights and responsibilities. "Same-sex partners [should] have access to pensions, family medical leave, hospital visitation rights and survivor benefits," he said, adding that the federal government should recognize state-level civil unions.

"Diversity is not a weakness, it is a strength — and you've got to recognize it and you have to respect people. If we want to be successful in the 21st century, we have got to bring out the human potential of every boy and girl in America, and every man and woman."

Perriello is associate director for HRC's political action committee. For more information on Campaign 2004, visit www.hrc.org/campaign/2004/index.asp

Wesley Clark: For the Record

Workplace Discrimination: Pledged to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a bill that would ban workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Hate Crimes: Supports expanding federal hate crimes legislation to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

HIV/AIDS: Supports the Early Treatment for HIV Act, which would expand Medicaid to people living with HIV, and supports science-based prevention programs.

Military: Supports a review of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" but does not support an outright repeal.

PHOTO: KAREN E. SEGRAVE, GETTYIMAGES

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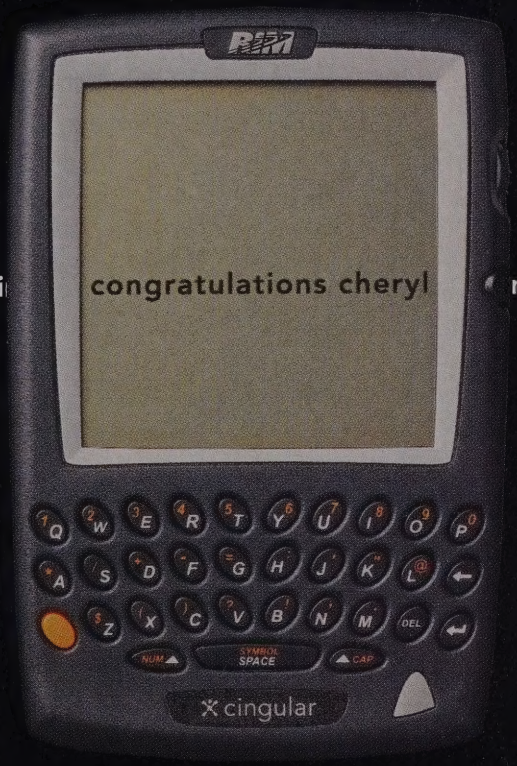

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BLACKBERRY

Put on Your Party Hat

Political Conventions Offer Chance for GLBT Visibility

By Mark Perriello and Bo Shuff

Want some action? Step onto the floor of the Republican or Democratic National Convention. The bright lights, the thousands of pounds of confetti, the balloons, the rallying cries, the political all-stars, the TV cameras — the conventions beat with tremendous energy. Experience one and you'll never want to miss another.

ILLUSTRATIONS: D. BIGDA/ ILLUSTRATIONWORKS.COM

Every four years, activists, party leaders, elected officials and celebrities come together to exchange ideas and craft their party's vision for the next four years. They help ratify the party platform, make key policy decisions and set the tone for the final months of the election. Human Rights Campaign staff and board members will be at both national conventions, working to help shape inclusive messages for both parties.

The events occur next summer after the presidential primaries. The Democratic National Convention takes place in Boston from July 26 to July 29. The Republican National Convention is slated for New York, Aug. 30 to Sept. 2.

Raising Our Profile

Members of HRC and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community from both parties need to plan to attend the conventions, says Emily Giske, a member of HRC's board of directors and the Democratic National Committee.

"For eight days next summer, America will be watching the Democratic and Republican conventions, so it is important that they see the LGBT community represented," Giske said. "Working one-on-one with activists and leaders on the floor of the convention raises the profile of our issues and can affect the language in the party platforms."

"All gay Republicans should be involved in caucus, precinct and all Republican Party activities that lead up to being elected a delegate to our convention in 2004," said Mark Mead, political director of the Log Cabin Republicans. "Being a part of the process is rewarding — and a crucial part of educating our party on issues of equality." HRC is working with the Log Cabin and another national GLBT group, the Republican Unity Coalition, to ensure that fair-minded leaders in that party receive solid support.

Likewise, high visibility of the GLBT community is key at the Democratic National Convention. "It truly has an impact on speakers and leaders when they see the HRC logo on signs held high by delegates packed onto the floor across the convention hall," said HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch, who spoke at the party's gathering in 2000 in Los Angeles. "I know it was an overwhelming experience for me to see it."

Eric Stern, the Democratic National Committee's GLBT outreach director, agrees. "The DNC was proud to announce that there were 212 openly GLBT delegates, alternates and other official participants to our 2000 convention," said Stern, a former HRC law fellow. Such visibility also draws more members of the GLBT community to the party, he noted.

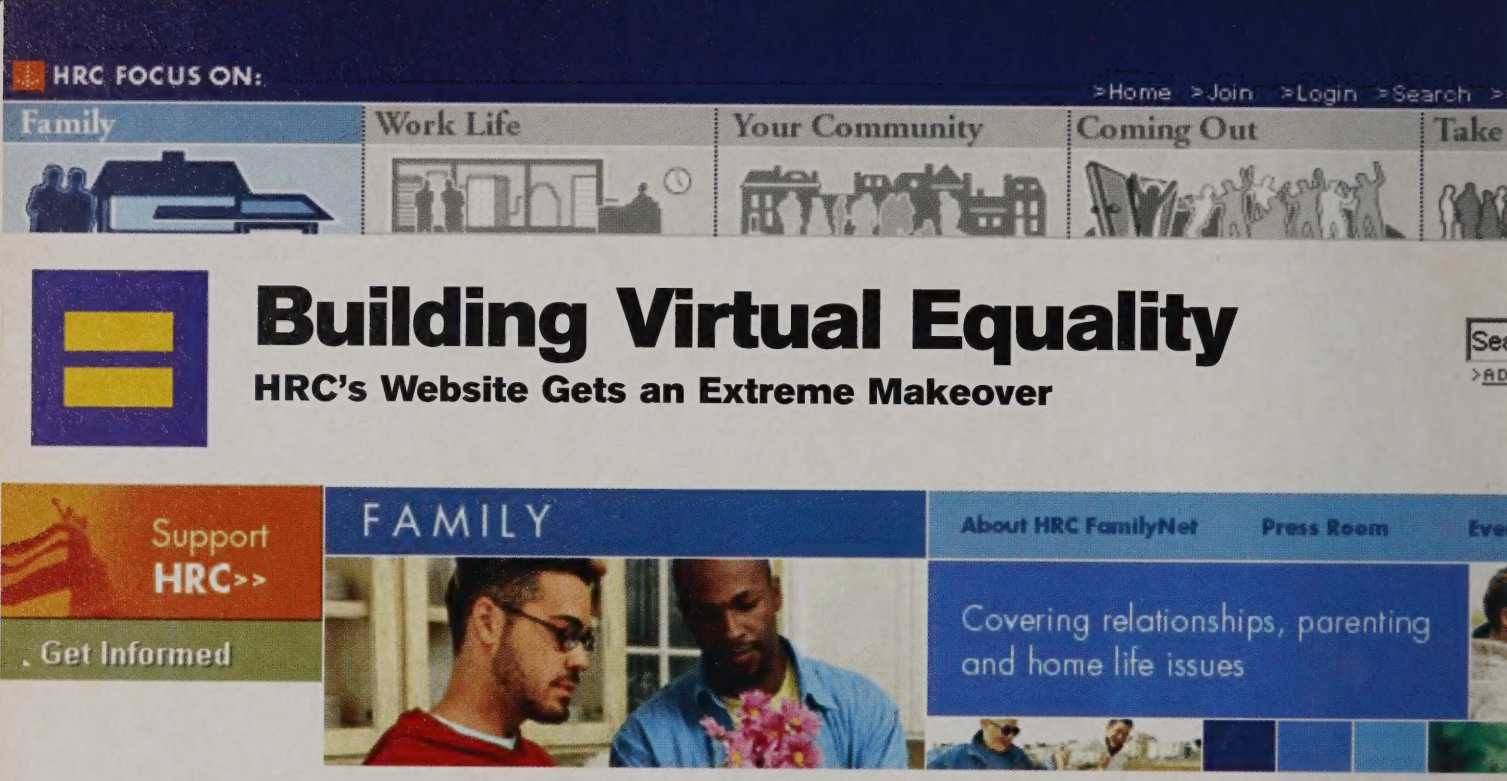
What Does it Take?

Becoming a delegate is easier than most people think, says Mike Mings, deputy director of HRC's political action committee. In every state, a different combination of state and national party rules and guidelines determine how the delegates are selected. In general, however, delegates to all national conventions are active in their local party organization. They represent every section of the country, and are selected by people at the local level.

It's helpful to begin by volunteering with a local party committee and a presidential campaign to lay the groundwork for a run for a delegate seat, says Giske. The results of each state's presidential primary or caucus often serve as a guideline for which delegates can attend the convention. For instance, if a presidential hopeful wins 30 percent of the vote in a state's primary, at least 30 percent of the state's delegation will represent that candidate.

Another way to get involved is to visit the HRC website's Campaign 2004 area where information is available about HRC's convention teams. Also, the "Laws & Legislation in Your State" section includes links to state parties and their delegate selection programs.

Perriello is HRC PAC's associate director; Shuff is HRC's Southern field organizer.



People who logged onto *www.hrc.org* in November got a surprise: The Human Rights Campaign launched a completely revamped website, with bright colors, new images and simpler navigation.

"We have an incredibly information-rich website, yet our users were telling us they couldn't find what they wanted because it often took too many clicks to get the answer to a question," said Tuvinh Vuong, HRC's associate director for website. "We also reorganized the content under several over-arching headings as it became clear to us that we were giving our users two general options: Get informed about issues facing the GLBT community and get involved with HRC."

Vuong has spent the last year working with staff across HRC to tear down and rebuild HRC's site. What's behind the site now is a content publishing tool that is used organization-wide, even by people who have no knowledge of HTML or other website coding. This tool enabled HRC to dump all its web content into a database, which will help automatically find and organize information that users will see when they visit *www.hrc.org.*

The overall goal was to make it easier to learn about and work for equality. "We wanted the site to be bright and inviting," said Kim I. Mills, HRC's education director who oversees the website. "We wanted it to include more images of real people. We wanted it to be more intuitive and less 'insiderish.' And we wanted it to deliver the information our users want."

Visitors have viewed more than 1.62 million pages so far in fiscal year 2004.

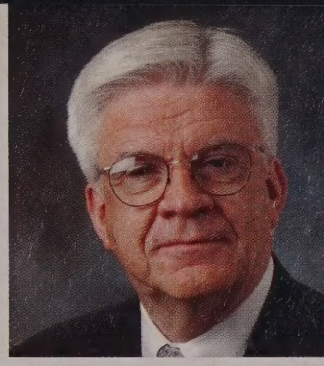
HRC's site is already hugely successful. The *National Journal* has named it one of the top five civil rights websites in America — but the real proof is in the usage. The number of page impressions has grown enormously in the last couple of years. (A "page impression" is when somebody views a full page; it's a more accurate term than "hit," since a page can comprise more than one hit.)

The average number of page impressions per month on *www.hrc.org* was about 594,000 in fiscal year 2002, and 1.09 million in fiscal year 2003. It's 1.62 million so far in fiscal year 2004 — a 173 percent increase in less than two years.

The number of unique visitors to the site also has climbed in each of the last three fiscal years. The average number of unique visitors per month was around 47,000 in fiscal year 2002; it rose to almost 72,000 in fiscal year 2003, and today, it is almost 119,000.

People who use HRC's website are taking advantage of the myriad resources. So far in fiscal 2004, they have downloaded tens of thousands of copies of HRC's Congressional Scorecard, Corporate Equality Index report, and "Resource Guide to Coming Out," in English and in Spanish. More than 200,000 visitors have registered with HRC's Online Action Center.

"We are selling several hundred thousand dollars' worth of merchandise per year on the site and we are projected to raise more than $1 million this year in memberships," Mills said. "Also, we have given away hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of publications, because that's what it would have cost had we printed and mailed them, as well as other information that you just can't get anywhere else on the web except at *www.hrc.org.*"



Talking Shop with Allan Gilmour

Ford Motor Co. Vice Chairman Allan Gilmour is a pioneer. In September 1997, the business executive came out as gay in the pages of *Between the Lines,* a Detroit-area gay and lesbian publication.

Today, Gilmour says he's still glad he did it, and is living a much happier, more balanced life than before. And of course, companies that provide supportive environments for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people win, too, he says.

Gilmour, who joined Ford in 1960 as a financial analyst, grew up in Vermont and has a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Michigan. He lives in Birmingham, Mich.

A Human Rights Campaign member since 1994, Gilmour has served on HRC's Business Council, a corporate advisory group. He recently spoke at HRC's annual Michigan gala dinner Nov. 15, and is active at the local level on GLBT issues.

Earlier this fall, Gilmour shared some of his thoughts with *Equality* magazine:

Equality: From a personal standpoint, and from having worked in a corporate environment in and out of the closet, how does it feel to be out at work?

Gilmour: My sexual orientation doesn't affect, and has never affected, my ability to do my job. Nonetheless, it is a much more comfortable situation being able to be myself and not feeling as if I have anything to hide. I am fortunate to work for a company like Ford, which values diversity and works hard not to hold employees back for reasons unrelated directly to their job performance or their abilities.

Equality: Are there any disadvantages to being out?

Gilmour: None that I can think of. Being out and being accepted has given me a better balance in my life, which I didn't necessarily have before. I can't see any disadvantages to that.

Equality: In the past, you have talked about acceptance toward gays as being a generational issue. In 2000, the Big Three automakers jointly announced domestic partner benefits. Has the pace of change surprised you at all?

Gilmour: Yes. The business community — including leaders such as Ford — has moved faster than I had expected. It's good business. It took time to get the pace moving on domestic partner benefits specifically, but I think that was more of an overall corporate action — not just an automaker move.

Equality: Has Ford's advertising campaign to the gay market been a success? How do you measure the success of a campaign aimed at the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender market? Has there been any backlash from such outreach? If so, has it altered the company's strategy?

Gilmour: There are a number of ways to measure the success of a campaign. One of the best measures of success is resulting sales and the bottom line financial impact of the campaign. In this instance, our relationship with HRC, coupled with the media campaign, generated incremental sales, which translated into increased profit. Negative reaction to the campaign was minimal and did not disrupt the program we launched in any way.

Equality: Beyond sexual orientation in the workplace, how ready is corporate America to deal with gender non-conformity and transgender people in the workplace?

Gilmour: I think it is moving to deal with those situations, as it has with other diversity-related situations. Ford is committed to diversity as good business and the right thing to do, and I'm sure that Ford has transgender employees.

If corporate America wants the best employees, who produce the best products and services for the wide-ranging tastes and backgrounds of its consumers, then it is smart to attract all types of good employees into its organizations.

Equality: Beyond partner benefits and non-discrimination policies, what should companies do to acknowledge GLBT employees? Is the answer any different for line workers as opposed to executives?

Gilmour: I think the best answer is to not treat them differently. And it doesn't matter if you are installing windshields on the line or running the company.

All people should be valued for their abilities and for the contributions they make to an organization — not for their sexual orientation, their race, their religion or any other reason that doesn't affect the way they do their jobs.

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New Digs!

Oct. 11, 2003, was a magical day for the Human Rights Campaign — and the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community — as HRC and the HRC Foundation dedicated their new home.

Under blue skies, HRC Capital Campaign Co-Chairs Edie Cofrin and Terry Bean, political leaders and others took to the podium to celebrate and say thanks. They praised HRC donors and volunteers for helping to raise the necessary funds over the last few years. So far, some 5,000 people have contributed to the effort.

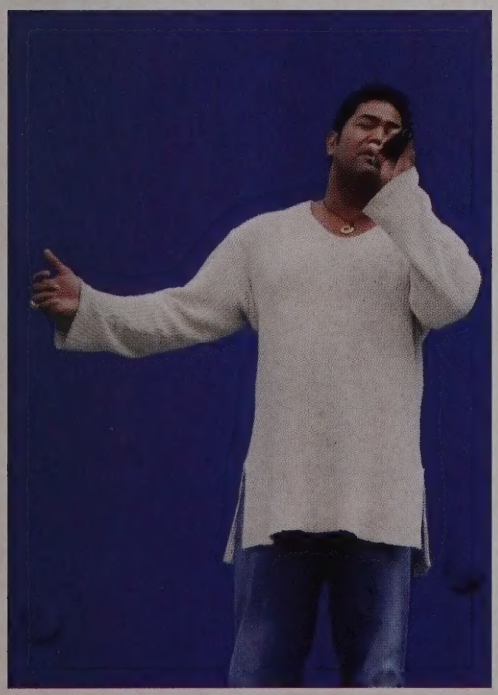
And then, on cue, huge streams of dark fabric covering the building dropped, unveiling the renovated headquarters. Blue-and-yellow confetti flew, the crowd roared and HRC's new home was a reality. The American flag and HRC Equality flag flew from the roof of the building.

A street fair followed, with cotton candy, a band and face paintings for kids. Bob the Builder made a special appearance. Streams of balloons arched over the street — all on, fittingly, National Coming Out Day.

The evening before, HRC rolled out the red carpet, from its front doors to the street, for top donors and board members to enjoy an open house.

"It is our great hope that this great building will continue to inspire people to be their bravest selves," said Elizabeth Birch, HRC's executive director. "To be brave enough to come out, to be brave enough to speak difficult truths, to be brave enough to transcend the differences that divide us and to celebrate the similarities that unite us all together."

Now that HRC's new home is open, drop in during your next Washington visit. Use HRC's Action Center, visit with staff or take a tour. It's a great way to see the work for equality firsthand.



PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER BANKS, B. PROUD AND JUDY G. ROLFE

(Top row, L-R) Former NFL lineman Esera Tuaolo sings "America the Beautiful;" visitors at the main donor wall; HRC Capital Campaign Director Christopher Speron, Bob the Builder and Capital Campaign President Jeff Sachse. (Center row) Capital Campaign Co-Chairs Edie Cofrin and Terry Bean with HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch; a young observer at the dedication. (Bottom) A jubilant Tipper Gore; Birch, former U.S. Ambassador James Hormel and D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams.

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Join 400-plus Federal Club Council members giving $5,000 or more each year. Council members can make part of their contribution tax-deductible by giving to the HRC Foundation, and receive all the benefits of a Federal Club membership as well as an invitation to HRC's annual Leadership Summit and other exclusive briefings. All Council members are assigned a personal HRC staff liaison.

To renew or upgrade, please visit HRC's online membership center at www.hrc.org *or contact our member services department at 202/216-1525 or* membership@hrc.org.

Others Ways to Support HRC

Join HRC's Online Action Center

HRC's Online Action Center enables participants to send e-mails and faxes to members of Congress and state legislators on issues relating to equality and protection for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans. Registered participants receive the informative *Equality Update* via e-mail throughout the year.

Give a Gift Membership

HRC gift memberships provide opportunities for recipients to make a personal difference in the nationwide effort to end discrimination against GLBT Americans.

Buy, Wear and Give HRC Merchandise

Help spread the message of equality with HRC gear and gift items. Visit the HRC Action Center & Store in Washington, D.C., or Provincetown, Mass., or drop into *www.hrc.org/cornerstore* to make a purchase for equality.

Get Information on Estate Planning

Contact HRC's office of estate planning at 202/216-1563 to learn more about the wide range of sensible ways to manage assets or structure an estate to perpetuate support of equality.

Support HRC's National Corporate Sponsors

Show corporate America that its support of the GLBT community and HRC is appreciated by patronizing our national corporate sponsors. A current listing is available on the HRC website and p. 28 of *Equality*.

got card?

HRC's annual renewal campaign gets under way in December.* Our goal is to renew every member as early in the calendar year as possible — to fortify HRC for the monumental challenges facing us in the 2004 election year.

Most members will receive their 2004 membership cards and bumper stickers in January. By processing your renewal by mail, phone, e-mail or on HRC's website by the end of January, you'll save us the time and cost of reminders.

Membership is the core of HRC's strength. Financially, it is our No. 1 source of funding. Politically, it's the basis of our organizational vitality. That's why we continue to send reminder notices to those who have not yet renewed.

Three tips: 1) Consider renewing via our website; your support will be processed instantly and go right to work. 2) If you think your membership is current but you're still receiving reminders, call Member Services, 202/216-1520, so we can clear up the mistake. 3) Make sure to provide or confirm your e-mail address, so we can reach you when action is needed.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

* Partners and Federal Club members are not renewed in this campaign.

Give an HRC gift membership this holiday season, and boost the fight for equality in the critical year ahead. Gifts over $35 include an HRC Equality Bear.

We'll acknowledge your gift with:

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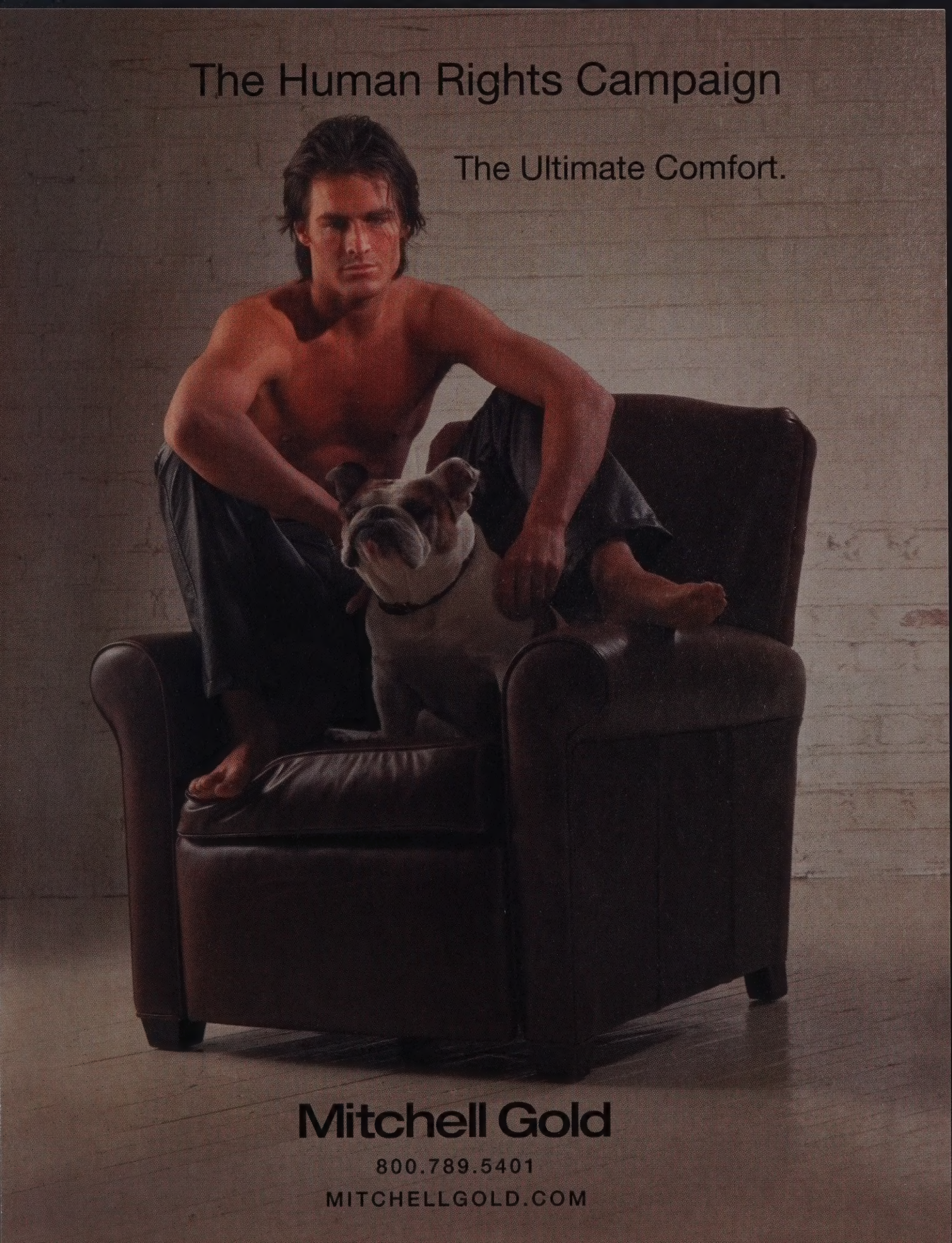
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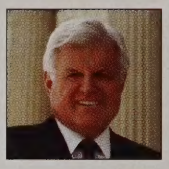

In a solid show of force, **Sens. Russ Feingold, D-Wis.; Dick Durbin, D-Ill.; Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.; Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.;** and **Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.**, defended gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families and spoke out against the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment on Sept. 4. The five voiced their opposition to the measure — which would ban civil marriage for same-sex couples — at a hearing of a Senate Judiciary subcommittee. They urged their colleagues to oppose the measure because it would discriminate against gay and lesbian families and write discrimination into one of the nation's most sacred documents.

"Our Constitution is an historic guarantee of individual freedom," said Feingold. "It has served as a beacon of hope ... to people around the world who yearn to be free, to live their lives without government interfering with their most basic human decisions."

prejudice Pushing Anti-Gay Policies & Remaining Out of Step

Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., threw his support behind the Federal Marriage Amendment, using some of the most bigoted language heard in awhile on Capitol Hill. He called homosexuality a "sickness," an "aberration" and a "sin" that needs to be "controlled," according to news reports Oct. 20.

"Representative Wamp does a disservice to his constituents by attacking gay people, not on what we know to be scientifically true, but based on prejudices and stereotypes," said HRC's Political Director Winnie Stachelberg. "Gay men and women in Tennessee make valuable contributions to their communities, raise families, own homes, pay taxes and live their lives like other Americans. Their congressional representatives should ensure their families are protected like other American families." More than 10,000 gay- and lesbian-couple households are in Tennessee, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Wamp, now serving his fifth term, has earned only zeroes from HRC on its Congressional Scorecard.

events

Greater New York Gala Dinner, Feb. 7. ▸ Waldorf-Astoria. Co-Chairs: Sheila Carson, John Morrison.

Colorado Gala Dinner, Feb. 14. ▸ Adams Mark Hotel. Co-Chairs: Lyn Bain, Morris Price.

Carolinas Gala Dinner, Feb. 21. ▸ Grandover Resort – Greensboro. Co-Chairs: Tony Burden, Terri Cartner, Phil Wells.

Chicago Laughing Out Loud, Feb. 27-28. ▸ Park West Theatre. Co-Chairs: Danny Cohen, Scott Franzen, Kimberly Michaelson.

Nashville Gala Dinner, Feb. 28. ▸ Loews Vanderbilt Hotel. Co-Chairs: Deidre Duker & Jim Hennesy.

Philadelphia Region Gala Dinner, Feb. 28. ▸ Loews Philadelphia Hotel. Co-Chairs: Mark Blecher & Stormy Lundy.

Los Angeles Gala Dinner, March 6. ▸ Century Plaza Hotel. Co-Chairs: Catherine Houser & Alan Uphold. For ticketing, contact Levy Pazanti Associates, 310/201-5033.

Austin Gala Dinner, March 20. ▸ Four Seasons. Co-Chairs: Earnest Morgan, Jill Wilcox.

Houston Gala Dinner, March 20. ▸ The Inter-Continental Hotel. Co-Chairs: Thomas Downing, Shari Heyen & Steven Wagner.

St. Louis Benefit Theater Event: "Hairspray," March 21. ▸ Fox Theatre. Co-Chairs: Elaine Queathem & Bruce Wessler.

Indianapolis Duck Pin Bowling, March 21. ▸ Fountain Square Theatre Building. Event Chair: Tony Pickell.

Atlanta Gala Dinner	**May 8**
Cleveland Dinner	**May 29**
Louisiana Gala Dinner	**May TBD**
Columbus Gala Dinner	**June 12**
Chicago Gala Dinner	**June 19**
San Francisco Gala Dinner	**July TBD**

For more information, please e-mail events@hrc.org or call 202/628-4160. For a full schedule, see www.hrc.org. See www.boxofficetickets.com for tickets.

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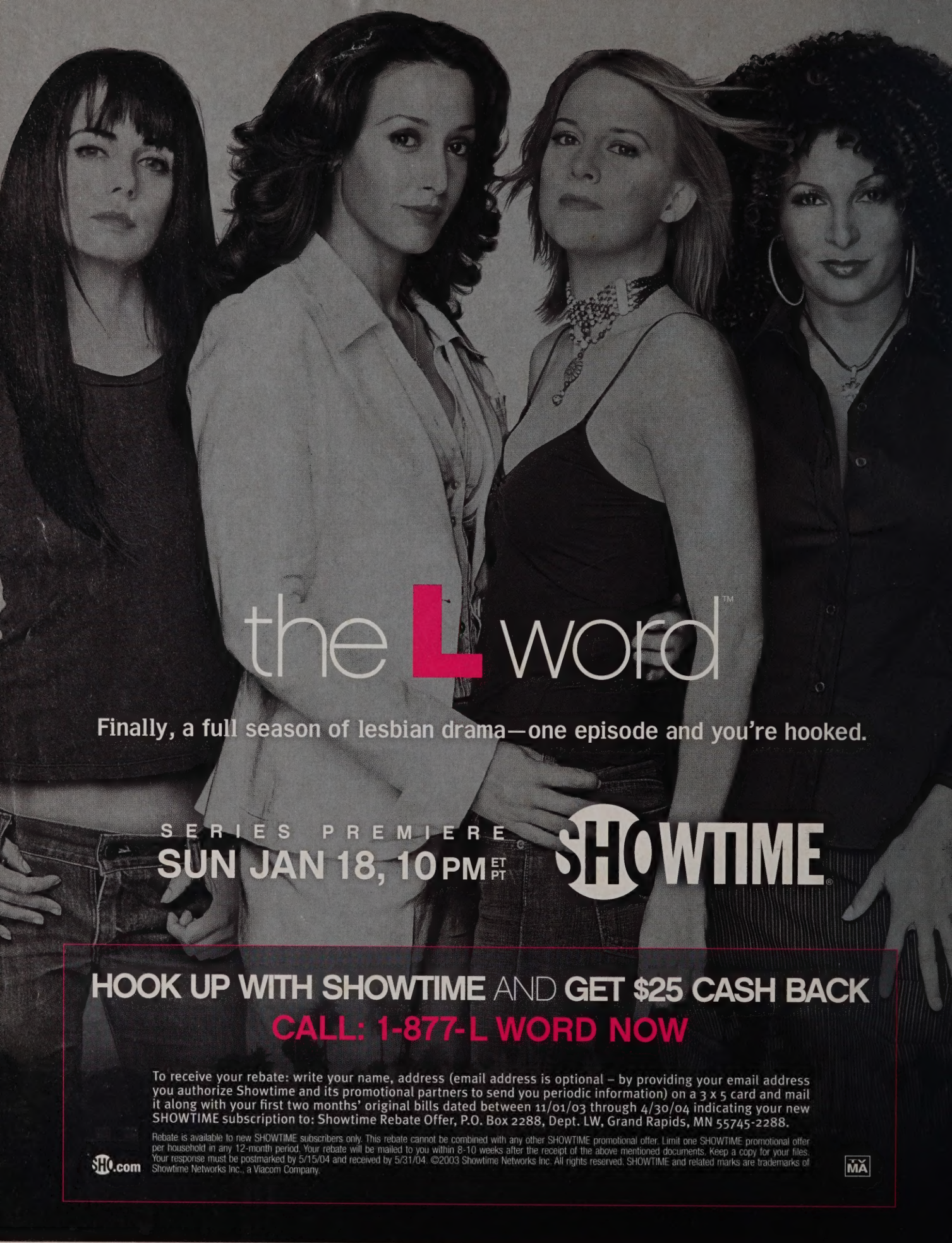
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